



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 25, 2014

Contact: Jenny Atchley, (303) 869-2835
jenny.atchley@state.co.us

**CHILD WELFARE WORKLOAD STUDY FINDS THAT COUNTY CASEWORKER AND
SUPERVISOR POSITIONS MAY BE SIGNIFICANTLY UNDERSTAFFED**

DENVER—A workload study of county child welfare workers in Colorado has found that the estimated time required for Colorado's child welfare caseworkers to complete required activities and meet program goals exceeds the time available from the current number of county caseworkers. Using an accepted modeling methodology, the study estimated that an additional 574 full-time caseworker positions and 122 related supervisory positions may be needed to handle caseloads, based on the amount of time workers spend on child welfare-related job tasks, if no changes are made to current processes and requirements. The study was requested by members of the General Assembly subsequent to the Department requesting that a workload study be conducted.

The study establishes a comprehensive picture of Colorado's county child welfare workload and staffing levels and provides information and estimates of how many staff are needed for each phase of child welfare casework. For example, the workload study includes a detailed staffing model and full-time-equivalent staff projections for each phase of the child welfare process, including screening reports of alleged child abuse or neglect, assessments of child abuse or neglect allegations, family meetings, ongoing case management, adoption and other tasks. The study provides a foundation for counties, the Department of Human Services, and policy makers to identify efficiencies and improvements needed in the structure and management of the child welfare system.

Projections in the workload study were based on monthly caseloads and service times for child welfare staff at the 54 counties that participated. All 64 counties in Colorado were invited to take part in the workload study, but 10 counties opted not to participate. In February 2014, about 1,300 child welfare workers participated in a 4-week detailed time study to record how much time they spent on 11

- continued -



We Set the Standard for Good Government

CHILD WELFARE WORKLOAD STUDY FINDS THAT COUNTY CASEWORKER AND SUPERVISOR
POSITIONS MAY BE SIGNIFICANTLY UNDERSTAFFED, 2-2-2-2

major child welfare services. This study approach provided a statewide perspective on current workloads.

The Colorado Office of the State Auditor (OSA) contracted with ICF International, in collaboration with Walter R. McDonald & Associates, to conduct the workload study. In combination, ICF and Walter R. McDonald & Associates have conducted more than 100 workforce assessment studies, including 10 staffing studies conducted in other states such as Washington, New York, Texas, California and Montana, specifically related to child welfare. All of these studies used similar tested data collection and/or modeling methodologies as was used in Colorado's study. The OSA consulted with and obtained input from the Department of Human Services on the scope of the study and on the selection of the ICF International team to perform the workload study.

Workload studies seek to identify the level of work that is appropriate for staff performing different types of services. Workload studies are *not* designed to measure the consequences of inappropriate staff workloads, or how work can be better distributed or performed. Although these issues may arise and be discussed, the focus of a workload study needs to be on measuring actual time spent on tasks, which can then be used to evaluate efficiencies, develop workload standards and determine whether additional resources are needed.

The workload study took a client-oriented approach, which focuses on the amount of time spent delivering services to a client. For child welfare programs, the client-oriented workload approach is the preferred method because it aligns with the client-focused business model used by child welfare programs. In addition, this approach accounts for differences in cases and services, such as case complexities and the lengths of time needed to provide different services, which aren't accounted for when you only look at caseload ratios.

The full report is available electronically on the OSA's website, <http://www.state.co.us/auditor>, via the link called "OSA Audit Reports." In accordance with state statute, the Legislative Audit Committee released the audit by a majority vote during a public hearing.

Under the direction of the state auditor, the OSA is the state's nonpartisan, independent external auditor with broad authority to audit state agencies, departments, institutions of higher education, and the Judicial and Legislative Branches. The OSA's professional staff serve the people of Colorado by addressing relevant public issues through high-quality, objective audits and reviews that promote accountability and positive change in government. Performance audits address whether programs operate in compliance with laws and regulations and in a manner that accomplishes intended program

- continued -

CHILD WELFARE WORKLOAD STUDY FINDS THAT COUNTY CASEWORKER AND SUPERVISOR
POSITIONS MAY BE SIGNIFICANTLY UNDERSTAFFED, 3-3-3-3

goals. Financial audits include annual audits of the state's basic financial statements and federal grants on a statewide level. IT audits review procedures and technology to ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the state's critical computer systems and taxpayer data. The OSA also tracks about 4,000 Colorado local governments for compliance with the Local Government Audit Law.